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### The Communicability of Nature

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# The Communicability of Nature

A look at how the work of Wordsworth, Thoreau, and Szymborska silences and empowers nature– and how changing anthropocentric ideas of language can include nature more equitably into contemporary society

Have a  
conversation with  
this stone.



Why did you use  
*English*?

Why did you even  
use *language*?

## The Problem

Anthropocentric views of communication have hindered our kinship and communication with nature. This disconnect can be seen clearly in the Romantic and Transcendentalist nature poets.

### William Wordsworth

#### Romantic

Wordsworth finds in nature exactly what he wants to find—a sublime so vast and mysterious that only an intellect like his can comprehend it. He sees nature as a mirror, one that validates his own “higher mind.” As such, Wordsworth silences any individual communication nature might have in favor of hearing and seeing a nature that compliments his own intellectual prowess.

### Henry David Thoreau

#### Transcendentalist

While Thoreau provides nature with the healthy “otherness” it so needs in order to be seen as an individual entity, he complicates that view with an alienating insistence on nature’s separation from humanity. He seeks in nature a distinct “not-culture,” in which he can find truths unavailable in the human realm. Nature no longer exists for itself, as any human might, but functions as a place of enlightenment, a silent arena for the poet’s own thoughts on life and living.

## Steps toward a Solution

Wisława Szymborska, a more contemporary Polish poet, uses irony and touches of eco-phenomenology in her poem, “Conversation with a Stone,” to highlight the problematic and dysfunctional notion of using human-centered language to communicate with the more-than-human world.

## A New Communication

Moving beyond anthropocentric ideas of communication and language makes room for new kinds of communication that have to do with perceptual reciprocity and physicality. When these are accepted as communication, nature is included in the larger literate world, and therefore must be accepted as an entity of value and importance—as much as any human.

“Thing-Power”

“Flesh-of-the-world”